Sermon | Proper 28C

TEXT: Luke 21:5-28

13 Nov. 2016

*Signs of the End*

*In the Name of +Jesus*. Amen.

Dear saints,

Maybe you didn’t come to Church this morning expecting to hear about the end of the world. But in the Holy Gospel and the Hymn of the Day, that’s exactly what you got: some pretty sobering words of Jesus, in which our Lord teaches about the signs which will accompany the end of the world. And what will those signs be? I did an informal count, and found at least five that Jesus mentions, and here they are.

Number one. Verses 5-9, talks about **the destruction of the temple**. The disciples were there, standing in the temple, admiring its architecture, commenting on the huge stones—how did they even lay these massive stones? And Jesus says that the temple will be destroyed. Not one stone will be left upon another. And that prophecy was fulfilled in 70 AD when the Romans came and destroyed Jerusalem. So that if you go to Jerusalem today, you will not find a temple there. The only thing you’ll find is one little section of wall—they call it the Wailing Wall—that remains of the original structure. Everything else was levelled to the ground. Number one—the temple will be destroyed.

Number two. The second sign—the **coming of false prophets** and teachers who come in the name of Jesus, to lead many astray. Verse 8:*many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is at hand!’ Do not go after them.*

The third sign—**natural disasters**. Verse 11. Jesus talks about “*earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences*.” And verse 25: “*Signs in sun and moon and stars. And on earth, perplexity of nations because of the roaring of the sea and the waves*.”

The fourth sign—**manmade disasters.** Verse 10: “*Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.*” A prophecy of wars and violence.

And then, that violence, Jesus teaches, will even reach the Christian Church. The fifth sign—**the persecution of Christians**. Verse 12: “*But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name’s sake.*” That the Church on earth will always be a persecuted Church.

So again. Doesn’t seem like the most uplifting of all Gospels is it? But in all reality, Jesus says these words not to scare us, not to frighten us—does a parent ever want to scare his children? But Jesus teaches us these words, actually for our encouragement. And why is that?

Well in some sense, we see these signs happening already, all around us, don’t we? Turn on the news. We know what it’s like to be a nation at war. We know what it’s like to be a nation that is plagued by natural disasters. And as a Church, we know what it is like to be plagued with false teachers, and persecution. These signs that Jesus mentions are not just future events, but present events. We see them happening already, all around us, even now.

So why does the Lord speak of these things? The Lord Jesus speaks of these things, these signs of the end, in order to prepare us in three ways:

First, these are signs that he is coming again. And that’s the big point. Jesus says, verse 27: “*Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.*” In other words, “when you see these things happen, remember, let them remind you, that I am coming soon.” And Christ’s coming again is a wonderful thing. Because we know that when he does come again, as we say in the Catechism, “he will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.” And this is what we’re all looking for, the Jesus Second Coming is the hope of the Church.

The second, so that we may know this is our opportunity to bear witness

Third, so that we will pray and not lose heart. Jesus connects the signs of the End with the need for prayer. Verse 36: *But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”* Pray for strength that you will not be spiritually and morally ruined by the End Time stresses *But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.****35****For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth.*

Two reactions: panic and patience

The world sees these things and loses their mind, because the world stores it’s treasure on earth. So that when the world loses earthly things, it is as if all is lost. But our treasure is in heaven. Because as Christians we know that this life isn’t all there is. There is no Empire or nation on the face of the earth that will endure forever. Even the United States will pass away. So we don’t put our hope in who’s in the White House, or who’s in Congress, or who’s in the Supreme Court. Our hope and our confidence isn’t in the government, but in Jesus, who was crucified for us, and is risen from the dead. Our hope is in our baptism, where we, like Rose this morning, we’re given the robe of Christ’s own holiness and righteousness, and all the gifts of the cross were poured out on us there, forgiveness, life, and salvation, in the water.